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HEADLINE: Frosh Gears Up For Senate Race

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BODY:

Republican state Sen. Howard A. Denis's decision to give up his seat to run for lieutenant governor has touched off a scramble in Montgomery County, with Del. Brian E. Frosh (D-Montgomery) wasting no time announcing for the seat Denis has held for 17 years.

Frosh, a Bethesda lawyer, has been a leading advocate of environmental issues in the General Assembly and is a former chairman of Montgomery's delegation to the state House. He narrowly lost a 1982 bid to oust Denis from the District 16 Senate seat, then won election to the House of Delegates in 1986 and 1990.

Denis is stepping down to be the ticket mate of GOP gubernatorial hopeful Helen Delich Bentley, a U.S. House member from Baltimore County. He is the third of Montgomery's seven state senators to announce they will not seek reelection this year.

Without Denis, a moderate-to-liberal lawmaker who tirelessly knocked on doors and distanced himself from the GOP's conservative wing, the Republican Party may have difficulty holding the Senate seat in the Democratic-leaning, Bethesda-based district. The three delegates from the district are all Democrats: Frosh, Nancy K. Kopp and Gilbert J. Genn.

Kopp, who made an unsuccessful bid to be speaker of the house in 1992, said she considered running for Denis's seat but decided to seek reelection to a sixth, four-year House term instead.

Frosh said serving in the 47-member Maryland Senate is "something I've wanted to do for 12 years." He noted that the Senate's leading environmental activist, Sen. Gerald W. Winegrad (D-Anne Arundel), is retiring this fall.

"Someone needs to fill that role of leadership in environmental issues," Frosh said. "I'd like to do that."

Don Toker, a lawyer and former congressional aide from Bethesda, also is running for the Senate seat in the Sept. 13 Democratic primary. He said Frosh's announcement has not changed his plans, but he did not rule out running for the House of Delegates.

Several candidates are expected to file for the seat Frosh is vacating. Eric Ellman, vice chairman of the Friendship Heights Village Council, said he is considering a bid. Another possible candidate is county Democratic chairwoman Susan Turnbull.

In addition to Denis, Montgomery Sen. Idamae Garrott (D) is retiring this year and Sen. Mary H. Boergers (D) is running for governor.

Two incumbents face potentially strong challengers. Sen. Patricia R. Sher (D) is being challenged in the primary by Del. Chris Van Hollen (D). Sen. Laurence A. Levitan (D) is likely to face Republican Del. Jean Roesser in the Nov. 8 general election.

Trawick Vows Lower Taxes, But How?

Montgomery County executive candidate Carol Trawick (R) said this week she would seek to reduce the county's local income tax rate by 20 percent, but she did not specify what services might be cut to accommodate such a drop in revenue.

Trawick, a business owner from Bethesda, called for returning the local income tax rate to 50 percent of the amount a taxpayer owes the state, as opposed to the current rate of 60 percent. She said she would "prioritize" county services and "right-size" the government, while also seeking more aid from Annapolis.

Like most other candidates for executive, however, she did not specify in her seven-page press release any current programs she would eliminate from the \$ 1.7 billion county government.

Brock Comes Out Swinging

Complete with a broken foot, former U.S. senator William E. Brock III returned to Capitol Hill last week to lunch with a few reporters and let loose some barbs he hopes to use in the fall against Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes (D).

Brock, who is running in the GOP primary against Montgomery County developer Ruthann Aron and Eastern Shore dentist Ron Franks, said he hopes his campaign will help "reconstruct" the Maryland GOP, which has made electoral gains in recent years.

He said it would be a "disaster" for Sarbanes to ascend to the chairmanship of the Banking Committee, which will occur if Sarbanes is reelected and the Democrats retain control of the Senate in the November elections. Brock said Sarbanes's recent complaints about rises in short-term interest rates amounted to "politicizing" the Federal Reserve.

"He's talking about politicizing our money," Brock said.

Brock made it clear he hopes to cast Sarbanes as a do-nothing legislator who has failed to deliver the goods for Maryland in his three six-year terms as senator. "There's no palpable evidence that he's been there for 18 years," Brock said. "I don't know of a single issue he has engaged himself in."

Brock said he did not believe he would be hurt by the recent Senate nomination of Oliver L. North by Virginia Republicans. North captured the nomination with the help of voters in the Virginia GOP's most conservative wing.

"I'm going to try real hard to let Virginia be Virginia and Maryland be Maryland," Brock said. "I don't see that any

of us have a right to try to certify candidates from other states."

Brock broke his foot in a recent household accident and said he is mending well.

Helm to Run For Montgomery Council

Lewis M. Helm, a Bethesda Republican and a commissioner for suburban Maryland's water and sewer system, announced his candidacy this week for an at-large seat on the Montgomery County Council.

Helm was an assistant secretary of health, education and welfare under Presidents Nixon and Ford, from 1973 to 1976. He is a commissioner and immediate past chairman of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.

The county council's four at-large seats are now held by Democrats. Three are running for reelection; the fourth, Bruce T. Adams, is running for county executive.

In an interview, Helm called the county's large incinerator under construction near Dickerson "a billion-dollar blunder." He said an independent agency should reassess the wisdom of completing the incinerator.

Sonner Seeks Seventh Term

Montgomery County State's Attorney Andrew L. Sonner announced Tuesday that he would seek a seventh term, promising voters a well-organized, vigorous but fair prosecutor's office.

While touting his experience and achievements in office, Sonner hinted that he was girding for one of his toughest reelection bids in years.

Sonner, 59, said he planned to run a low-budget campaign and took a swipe at expected Democratic primary challenger Kenneth "Drew" Grigg Jr., one of the prosecutor's former assistants.

"I hope that the money I understand my opponent is prepared to spend does not distort the debate," Sonner said during a news conference in Rockville. Sonner, who ran unopposed in each of the last three general elections, also faces a potential challenge from Gaithersburg lawyer James F. Shalleck. The Justice Department attorney is running unopposed in the Republican primary.

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